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ABSTRACT

In this paper, I explore some of MacIntyre's ideas concerning utopia, education, and hope. I focus on his suggestion that a utopianism of the present is needed in public life generally and education specifically. My argument involves three steps. I firstly analyse MacIntyre's lecture on the educated public and in particular his suggestion that teachers are the forlorn hope of Western Culture. I argue that the rather pessimistic tone of this conclusion is only seemingly (and not actually) at odds with what MacIntyre says elsewhere about the potential of education to challenge the worst excesses of advanced capitalism. To help build this argument, I secondly examine what MacIntyre says about the social virtue of hope in Marxism and Christianity. There he documents some significant concerns with Marxist ideology but nonetheless concludes that Marxism is the only project that can re-establish hope as a social virtue. I thirdly document how MacIntyre continues to champion the virtue of hope in his more recent work. However, the hue of this virtue has become both Marxist and Aristotelian. He now holds that a "utopianism of the present" is needed to combat advanced capitalism. While utopians of the future sacrifice away the possibility of learning how to transform the present, utopians of the present refuse to make this sacrifice. I argue that MacIntyre's later work suggests he has renewed hope that a practice-based education can contribute to a utopianism of the present: a utopianism that can challenge the iniquities and distortions generated by market based economies. I conclude by considering how the learning in such practice-based education might be empirically researched and shared.

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The Idea of an Educated Public

> Is there anything more heart-breaking than hope? (Robertson 2006, 9)

Alasdair MacIntyre begins his lecture "The Idea of an Educated Public" with a provocative assertion—"teachers are the forlorn hope of the culture of Western modernity" (MacIntyre 1987, 16). This assertion, and the arguments that follow, gives rise to a number of questions that I will try to address in this paper. What does he think teachers need to save Western modernity from? What does he take the purposes of education systems to be? Why does he depict the endeavor of teachers in Western contexts as "forlorn" and does he consistently think they are? What does he think hope is? I will return to the issue of what he thinks hope is in the next section and will for now address the first three questions.

In a more recent paper on education with Joseph Dunne, MacIntyre expresses concern about what is generally most valued by people in Western modernity. He pithily remarks that success is generally deemed to be "going where the money is" whereas lack of success entails "being where the money is not" (MacIntyre and Dunne 2002, 2). Western education systems, he suggests, cannot generally hope to alter this situation of distorted values, as they have two (incompatible) purposes—*socialisation* and the fostering of *the capacity to think for one self* (MacIntyre and Dunne 1987, 16). The lecture on the educated public emphasizes that students in eighteen century Scotland learned how to think for themselves through reading and debating the content of moral philosophical texts. In his later discussion with Dunne, MacIntyre stresses that educators today must help students learn how to be "reflective and independent members of their families and political communities" (MacIntyre and Dunne 2002, 2). In order to become reflective and independent members of a Western political community, students need to learn how to ask hard questions about the market orientation of their culture.

In particular, individuals will know how to question whether the social and economic activities that they and other community members participate in really do serve the common good. If questioning finds they do not, MacIntyre

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contends the questioners must engage in rational debate about how they can alter social orders. However, from the perspective of those in power in the West, these will be questions "it is important not to ask" (MacIntyre and Dunne 2002, 2). MacIntyre thus maintains that if teachers successfully help their students to think for themselves, their students will "bring to the activities of their adult life questioning attitudes that will put them at odds with the moral temper of the age and with its dominant institutions" (3). Unfortunately, the institutions in Western societies are so geared towards market interests that opportunity for questioning and debating the prevailing social and economic orders in a sustained and systematic way has become all but impossible. MacIntyre thus appears to think teachers are the forlorn hope of Western culture as Western education systems place two competing and incommensurable demands on teachers.

Success in one educational purpose will necessitate failure in the other. On the one hand, those who are successfully *socialised* and shaped into compliant workers will be unable or unwilling to question the capitalist orders of our day. On the other hand, those who have learned how to question such orders will find themselves isolated and without opportunity to engage in rational dialogue with others about how the common good might be better achieved. However, MacIntyre does not advocate teachers giving up. He maintains that: "what education has to aim at for each and every child, if it is not to be a mockery, is both the development of those powers that enable children to become reflective and independent members of their families and political communities and the inculcation of those virtues that are needed to direct us towards the achievement of our individual and common goods" (MacIntyre and Dunne 2002, 2). Contrary to the notion of teacher work being a forlorn hope, this quote indicates MacIntyre may not have altogether abandoned hope that education can contribute towards the achievement of individual and common goods. In the chapters MacIntyre writes in the more recent edited collection on his work, sub-titled *Virtue and Politics,* MacIntyre makes more specific reference to the themes of education, utopia, and hope. Again, these references are more upbeat about the possible ways in which education might support social and political reform. I now turn to these themes and what MacIntyre says about the social virtue of hope in *Marxism and Christianity*.

Where He Is, Where He Was, Where We Need to Be

> Human life is sustained by hope, and to rely on hope is to go beyond what there is sufficiently good reason to expect. (MacIntyre 2011b, 333)

In "Where we were, where we are, where we need to be," MacIntyre concludes that any account of human life and human crises is incomplete unless the role of hope is considered. Indeed, MacIntyre argues that human life is 'sustained by hope." He explains that hope is different from glib confidence that is blind to reality. The hopeful person lives with full awareness of the difficulties that lie before them. However, they are not crushed by the weight of these difficulties. Hope allows them to rationally perceive what they should be "justified in expecting and yet hope for much more than that" (MacIntyre 2011b, 333). Here, MacIntyre maintains that hope is a theological virtue, adding that post-Enlightenment world views such as Marxism or liberalism permit no place for the exercise of hope. This claim is interesting as it perhaps conflicts with what MacIntyre said about hope much earlier in his life in *Marxism and Christianity*. In this text MacIntyre suggests religion can be a genuinely revolutionary force. He argues religion *should* help persons to both criticize exploitation in society and collectively act to reduce such oppression. However, he also maintained that the revolutionary function of religion was not being realised in practice in the middle of the twentieth century.

MacIntyre agreed with Marx in thinking that history had shown religion to have two core functions in societies with class divisions—neither of which facilitates the sort of revolution and reduction of exploitation MacIntyre thought religion should help to bring about. On the one hand, it reinforces the authority of the powerful in the established political order by suggesting their authority is divine. On the other hand, religion consoles the exploited and oppressed within the established political order by promising them in heaven that which is denied them in earth. MacIntyre reasons that this second function of religion does have some merit in so far as it provides the common people with a vision (however blurry) of what a better political order might look like. However, he also suggested this facet of Christianity may often distract people from the practical social task of establishing a better political order by diverting their attention towards heaven. Thus, MacIntyre thought Marxism became the necessary historical successor to Christianity because the latter had become too other worldly. In so doing it sanctified the existing social order and came to represent "a counter-revolutionary force" (MacIntyre 1968, 104). MacIntyre suggested that religion becomes counter-revolutionary when it focusses on the hereafter rather than this earth when social conditions are such that it is practically feasible to work towards a better social order on this earth.

MacIntyre seems to have lost faith in the revolutionary power of religion in *Marxism & Christianity*. In the text MacIntyre also demonstrates his acute awareness of problems associated with Marxist theory. The most notable

problem concerns prediction. As is well known, Marx proclaimed that the collective action of workers would result in the successful overturn of capitalism. MacIntyre explains how this stance is problematic at two levels. For one, history has shown otherwise. Socialism has not (or not yet…) defeated capitalism. For another, Marxist theory has been criticised as un-scientific on the grounds that Marx's predictions about the future were not falsifiable. Here MacIntyre remarks that "at more than one point, Marx appears to predict *unconditionally* not merely the intensifying crisis of capitalism but the transition to socialism. Why does he feel able to do this? Again, Marx himself gives no clear answer" (MacIntyre 1968, 84–85). MacIntyre expressed other concerns about Marxism in *Marxism and Christianity too,* arguing that it can be, like Christianity, conservative and counter-revolutionary.

He argued that in modern liberal democracies greater political rights will not in themselves lead to real human freedom unless collective action is taken to reduce and severely "limit the power wielded within society by those with property over against those lacking it. The basic inequalities due to property must be eliminated if the state is to be a society of free and equal members" (MacIntyre 1968, 42). MacIntyre reasons that the dominant capitalist/liberal political and economic theory of the nineteenth century suffered from profound problems. Marx critiqued these problems which still persist today—albeit in different form. He remarks that today "liberalism can combine within itself a drive towards ideals of political equality with an actual fostering of economic inequality" (133). MacIntyre argues that "Marxism was intended to be an anti-ideology, a critical instrument for unmasking" (139) injustices generated by capitalist social structures. However, it did not always achieve this aim in practice. MacIntyre stated that "Marxism became available as a conservative ideology the moment social forms appeared which were undeniably different from those of classical capitalism" (139). The different social forms MacIntyre has in mind here are ones that reflect conscious planning and management of the economy. He reasons that direct state intervention into the planning of the market and the emergence of new relations between the state and large corporations "rendered as obsolete the notion of capitalism as essentially a form of unplanned economy" (120–121).

Marxism and Christianity did then see MacIntyre questioning the viability of Marxist theory and practice as an alternative to capitalism. Furthermore, by 1968, MacIntyre had retreated from the socialist activity he had formerly engaged in as he did not think Marxists had "adequately theorised the problem of revolutionary practice" (Blackledge and Davidson 2009, xlvi). In spite of retreating from socialism and openly criticising Marxism, MacIntyre concluded that "the Marxist project remains the only one we have for re-establishing hope as a social virtue" (MacIntyre1968, 116). Why did he believe this?

MacIntyre thought that societies need critical philosophies. Marxism may be flawed, he suggests, but it is the best critical theory we have got. MacIntyre did not, though, believe that the power of the Marxist critique of capitalism resides in its downright dubious predictions about the future. Instead the power of the Marxist critique resides in its affirmative message of hope. Hope that collective social action can lead to social improvement. As we have seen, MacIntyre continues to champion the need for the virtue of hope in his most recent work. However, as we have also seen MacIntyre now considers hope to be a theological not a social virtue. How significant is this reclassification? Prima Facie this shift seems important. However, we must acknowledge that though MacIntyre now considers hope to be a theological virtue he does not seem to have significantly altered his view on what hope is or how important it is in human life. Rather MacIntyre has consistently suggested that human beings need hope if they are to improve their lot and/or challenge the worst excesses of capitalism. Indeed, in my view, hope is for MacIntyre a virtue infused with both Marxist and Aristotelian aspects. While MacIntyre's thinking has by his own admission shifted over time, certain Marxist themes have consistently animated his work—as we shall now see.

MacIntyre's Revolutionary Aristotelianism

Anthony Burns has suggested that MacIntyre's philosophy has evolved through three distinct but related phases: Marx *without* Aristotle (during the 1950s–1960s), Aristotle *without* Marx (during the mid-1960s to the mid-1990s) and Marx *and* Aristotle (from the mid-1990s to the present) (Burns 2011, 36). In the first phase of his career, MacIntyre felt that Marxist theory could raise consciousness amongst the working classes of the need to break from the existing social orders of industrial capitalism. Aristotelian references are conspicuous by their absence during this phase of MacIntyre's thought (Burns 2011, 39). *Marxism and Christianity* falls within the second phase. During the middle period MacIntyre became disillusioned with Marxism (Burns 2011, 40) and pessimistic that "alternative . . . political and economic structures . . . could be brought to replace the structures of advanced capitalism" (MacIntyre 1984, 262). MacIntyre (2011a) stated that Burns is "partly right" to characterise this "middle period" as one of *Aristotle without Marx*. He concedes his interactions with other Marxists had become futile by the mid-1960s and that he instead looked to the Aristotelian tradition for resources to critique capitalism (we shall see more of how he did this shortly). However, MacIntyre also maintains that certain Marxist truths still pervaded the middle phase of his philosophical project.

He suggests that throughout his career he has had an unshakeable belief that capitalism is an exploitative system that will in the end require capital to flow in the most profitable direction rather than toward human need (MacIntyre

2011b). MacIntyre has been consistent too in his view that such unjust social orders necessitate and invite resistance. Nonetheless he believes capitalism has now successfully co-opted trade unions and other socialist groups in such ways that, though their actions impede "capitalist growth and hegemony in the short run" (MacIntyre 2011b, 316) they strengthen it in the long term. In his middle period MacIntyre, therefore, developed the argument that it is local communities rather than Marxist and socialist movements that are best placed to resist capitalist ideologies and activities (MacIntyre 1984, 1987). We can little doubt though that MacIntyre most explicitly seeks to fuse Aristotelian and Marxist ideas in his later writings (see especially MacIntyre 2016, 2011a), with Knight (2013) suggesting that MacIntyre is above all else a "revolutionary Aristotelian" thinker.

In "How Aristotelianism Can Become Revolutionary: Ethics, Resistance and Utopia," MacIntyre considers how Aristotle's thoughts on character formation might be meaningfully related to ethical and political life today. Like in *After Virtue*, he maintains that contemporary institutions frequently undermine possibilities for virtuous practice and the pursuit of common as well as individual goods. He argues that four features of current Western culture make it difficult to learn how to ask, let alone answer, "Aristotelian" ethical and political questions. These features of contemporary life are the compartmentalization of human activity, the distortion of desire towards economic as opposed to genuine individual and common goods, conditions of gross inequality, and the nation state and the markets having the last word on what the law is. MacIntyre firstly remarks that our everyday life is frequently divided up into different spheres such as work and family, private and public, online or offline. These different spheres each have their own set of expectations and norms. When one type of conduct is expected in one context and a different type of conduct is expected in another, social malleability becomes vital to succeeding in each of the different spheres of life people are involved in. This required social malleability increasingly precludes, however, the viewing of one's life as a whole in the sort of teleological way Aristotle thought vital for human flourishing. Today it has thus become ever harder to ask a key "Aristotelian" ethical question: how can I order the sum of activities in my life in such a way that I will be striving for genuine as opposed to merely monetary goods?

The second virtue distorting feature of contemporary life concerns our habits of character formation. MacIntyre maintains that to flourish as human beings we need to learn how to distinguish genuine goods from counterfeit ones. Unfortunately, "we inhabit a social order in which a will to satisfy those desires that will enable the economy to work as effectively as possible has become central to our way of life, a way of life for which it is crucial that human beings desire what the economy needs them to desire. What the economy needs is that people should become responsive to its needs rather than their own" (MacIntyre 2011a, 13). Related to this distortion, MacIntyre thirdly suggests we live in conditions of gross inequality today where even successful economic growth ultimately only furthers inequality. Here the rich are so concerned with their self-advancement that reasoning about the common good has become all but impossible. Again, MacIntyre draws upon Aristotle to critique the status quo. "Aristotle pointed out long ago that a rational polity is one that cannot tolerate too great inequalities, because where there are such, citizens cannot deliberate together rationally" (13). However, it is not just the rich that perpetuate gross inequality. A combination of state and market power actively supports it too. Indeed, he fourthly reasons that 'since the modern state has become so well engrained with the market, it is in fact the state-and-the-market that is our lawmaker" (14). However, MacIntyre argues that no theoretical critique will in itself be able to challenges these four trends unless attention is also given to the issue of character formation. Here the pursuit of practices has a vital role to play.

Practices, Institutions and Virtues

> Practices must not be confused with institutions. Chess, physics, and medicine are practices; chess clubs, laboratories, universities, and hospitals are institutions. Institutions are characteristically and necessarily concerned with...external goods. They are involved in acquiring money . . . they are structured in terms of power and status, and they distribute money, power, and status as rewards...the ideals and creativity of the practice are always vulnerable to the acquisitiveness of the institution, in which the cooperative care for the common goods of the practice is always vulnerable to the competitiveness of the institution. In this context, the essential function of the virtues is clear. Without them, without justice, courage and truthfulness, practices could not resist the corrupting power of institutions. (MacIntyre 1984, 194)

While MacIntyre's oft-cited explanation of the relationship of practices and virtues to institutions is open to different interpretations, I am inclined toward the following reading. Practices ought to be co-operative more than competitive human activities that have certain standards of excellence internal to them that make them what they are. Practices are passed on from groups to individuals, who in turn sustain and revise the practice of the group. In contrast virtues are qualities persons develop when they pursue a practice to the highest possible standard and with an eye on the goods internal to that practice rather than for external reward. While MacIntyre does caution that one can develop virtues without practices, he nonetheless believes practices are a primary way in which they can be developed. Indeed, Knight remarks that, "practices serve as schools of the virtues" (Knight 2007, 152). Though MacIntyre does believe

practices depend on institutions, he also maintains the goods internal to practices are all too often in danger of becoming subordinate to the pursuit of power and wealth in institutions (Knight 2007, 158). It is significant that MacIntyre thinks personal vice is a cause of institutional corruption as much as the institutions themselves (MacIntyre 1984).

MacIntyre suggests that the Aristotelian vice, pleonexia (avaricious activity) has become a central "virtue" of persons who act (consciously or otherwise) to support the dominant capitalist way of life today (MacIntyre 2016, 109). MacIntyre (1988) is critical of Thomas Hobbes's translation of pleonexia. For Hobbes, pleonexia is about wanting more than one's fair share of wealth. For Aristotle however, pleonexia involves leading life to accrue wealth without limit. MacIntyre explains the significance of this misleading interpretation: "what such translations conceal from view is the extent of the difference between Aristotle's standpoint...and the dominant standpoint of peculiarly modern societies. For the adherents of that standpoint recognize that acquisitiveness is a character trait indispensible to continuous and limitless economic growth, and one of their central beliefs is that continuous and limitless economic growth is a fundamental good" (MacIntyre 1988, 112). MacIntyre however wants to remind us that wealth without limit is not a fundamental good—it is not a good at all. He also wants to highlight that the virtue of justice advocated by Aristotle is radically different from today's "virtue" of avarice. In so doing, he indicates practices are all too often corrupted by the institutions of our day. Though MacIntyre believes avarice tends to prevail in advanced capitalist societies instead of justice based on desert, he also believes that the virtuous pursuit of practices can interrupt this tendency, at least at local levels.

The Common Good and Utopianism of the Present

In *Ethics and the Conflicts of Modernity* and "Politics, Philosophy, and the Common Good," MacIntyre suggests that a primary common good of human persons entails collective acts of practical learning. He maintains that through practical activity with others, each person can learn what it is good for them to do in their life. For MacIntyre working out what is good for a person to do in his or her life is a matter of practical reason—and each person can only learn to work out their goods with others. He claims that taking part in co-operative practices such as fishing, farming, playing in an orchestra, and being part of a team of scientists can afford opportunities for persons to think with others about what it is good for them to do in their lives. In *Ethics and the Conflicts of Modernity*, he stresses that it is crucial that people learn how to desire what they have good reason to desire (often through mistakes) if they are to live flourishing lives. These thoughts (on the importance of persons learning to desire what they have good reason to) connect to what MacIntyre has maintained since *After Virtue*[1] *viz*., that flourishing lives are characterized by the virtuous pursuit of practices. Virtuous engagement in a practice is about much more than simple technical proficiency in that practice—it also requires an active concern for the common good. He suggests that the person of practical reason has learned how to order the activities in their life (whether they be fishing, farming, music, science, or any other practice) in such a way that they are able to think about more than their own immediate desires. Germane to this argument is MacIntyre's earlier noted implication that young persons need support to learn which of their desires are for genuine goods and which are not (MacIntyre 2011a, 13). Without such support, young persons are more likely to end up driven by counterfeit desires and virtues—desires for money and power without limit. Persons with genuine virtues will instead be able to think about and work towards the common good as well as their own.

MacIntyre's point seems to be that too many persons today value wealth and power too highly and traditional virtues such as justice and the common good insufficiently. However, while the dominant social and economic orders are exceptional at preventing practical reason about the common good from emerging, MacIntyre does not think educators should give up (MacAllister 2016, 525). MacIntyre argues that a "utopianism of the present" is needed so as to combat the ideology of advanced capitalism. While utopians of the future sacrifice the present for the future, utopians of the present refuse to sacrifice away the present. Instead, they insist that "the range of present possibilities is always greater than the established order is able to allow for" (MacIntyre 2011a, 17). MacIntyre explains that it is in local situations of everyday conflict that utopian questions about the common good really matter. In respect to education and character formation, MacIntyre maintains that everything hinges on the type of practices and projects persons become involved in (MacIntyre 2011a, 15). Here he again looks to education and provides the example of a school.

MacIntyre argues that it sometimes becomes possible for people in a community to reflect upon the sort of school they want their children to attend. When this opportunity for participation and decision-making about the purposes of a school emerges the "achievement of human goods often takes new and unpredicted forms for which the existing social order hitherto afforded no space" (MacIntyre 2011a, 17). What I think MacIntyre is alluding to here is that though many contemporary schools and communities do not provide much in the way of opportunity to help young

[1] They also connect to some of his earliest essays, perhaps especially *Notes from the Moral Wilderness* (MacIntyre 2009).

persons think about and work towards the common (as opposed to the economic) good, this need not always be the case, especially if persons in communities can come together to question the purposes of their schools. Thus, for MacIntyre, it is possible for educational institutions to become places where collective action can subvert the dominant, individualistic ideals of advanced capitalism. This could entail collective practical reasoning about what it may be good for people to do in their lives via participation in and reflection upon practices that seek the common good.

In *Ethics and the Conflicts of Modernity*, MacIntyre emphasizes that Aristotelian and Thomistic conceptions of the common good should not be confused with the modern idea of a public good (MacIntyre 2016, 168–169). While on the modern understanding individuals may draw upon public goods in order to satisfy their individual preferences and goals, on the older Aristotelian/Thomistic understanding common goods can only be realized by individuals within the context of a social group that takes part in activities together to achieve common goods and common goals. MacIntyre suggests that schools can contribute to two different types of social experience, one that encourages students to think about public goods in terms of satisfaction of individual preferences and another that encourages students to think about common goods in terms of shared activities and practices (174). He is firmly in favour of the latter type of schooling. He maintains that teachers should not primarily aim to teach students skills for the workplace (though he concedes this may be a, but certainly not the only, aim of education). Instead they need to help students extend their powers through participation in various literary, mathematical, scientific, musical, and athletic practices (173).

MacIntyre is especially concerned with how skills-focused-schooling foists desires and goals upon students that are not really their own but merely what the workplace and economic growth need. He states that a "good school is a place where students, in the course of developing their own powers, are able to find a direction that they can make their own. An education focused too exclusively on skills, on means, leaves them without an adequate sense of the ends that should be theirs as contrasted with the ends that others for their own purposes impose upon them" (MacIntyre 2016, 173). MacIntyre suggests that undesirable consequences arise from skills-focused-schooling. Student desires and preferences will be individualistic and liable to prey and manipulation by market needs. There will be a pre-occupation with test scores in educational institutions and a "shaping of unadventurous minds, minds adverse to risk taking, minds open to being victimized by conventional notions of success" (174). MacIntyre believes that a more practice-based schooling has potential to expose students to a different sort of social experience. One that encourages engagement in practices with a focus on common goods, and common goals as well as individual ones. This belief is undoubtedly utopian, but if MacIntyre is right, the utopia at stake might be realizable through a practice-based education in some communities and contexts.[2]

Concluding Thoughts

Hope is a virtue that MacIntyre has turned to repeatedly in his work. As early as *Marxism and Christianity*, MacIntyre was suggesting that hope is needed if human beings are to challenge the idea that the future will be a mere replication of the present. There he says that the "whole Marxist attempt to envisage societies from the standpoint of their openness to the future…runs counter to the spirit of the age in which the future is always conceived of as a larger edition of the present. It is important to be able to combat that spirit, if the virtue of hope is to survive in secular form" (MacIntyre 1968, 142). While he may have later reclassified hope as a theological rather than social virtue MacIntyre nonetheless still maintains that human beings need hope if they are to learn how to face up to the reality of the challenges before them without having to give up belief that the future and present need not be a mere mirror of the present and past. MacIntyre does concede his account of hope is incomplete (MacIntyre 2011b). However, his argument that a utopianism of the present is needed, grounded in collective local action rather than Marxist movements, perhaps gives an indication of the sort of thing MacIntyre thinks it would be virtuous to hope for today.

MacIntyre has also repeatedly connected hope to education in his work. While he characterised teachers as the forlorn hope of western culture in his lecture on the educated public, in more recent work MacIntyre arguably has renewed hope that a practice-based education can contribute to a utopianism of the present: a utopianism that can challenge the iniquities and distortions generated by the market economy. Indeed, when his various remarks on education, virtue and hope are considered together it is my view that his rather pessimistic conclusion that teachers are the forlorn hope of Western culture is only seemingly (and not actually) at odds with what he says elsewhere about the potential of education to challenge the worst excesses of advanced capitalism. Indeed, he insists that schools can become sites where the political imaginations of parents, students and teachers can be transformed. Perhaps because of this he also insists that "we badly need good empirical studies of both forms of schooling that enable children, their parents, and their teachers to achieve forms of good not otherwise achievable" (MacIntyre 2011a, 17). For those

[2] MacIntyre has conceded that his educational proposals can be construed as utopian (MacIntyre and Dunne 2002, 15; Knight 2007).

engaged in education research such as myself much perhaps hinges on what MacIntyre takes to be a "good" empirical study. In this respect, he suggests that what matters is that learning accrues from the empirical studies conducted—learning that can then be fed into practices elsewhere in such a way that the practices and imaginations of people are transformed. This suggests that MacIntyre thinks education research should aim to provide real world narratives about how parents, teachers and students have learned or failed to learn how to order their desires and practices in ways that promote genuine human flourishing as opposed to counterfeit.

MacIntyre's renewed faith in the capacity of education to help people learn how to challenge the worst excesses of capitalism today is perhaps utopian but that does not mean he is hoping for the impossible. I do agree with MacIntyre here. Research in education should seek (much more than it currently does) to generate narratives about how teachers, parents, students and other community members have sought to overcome the logic and practices of capitalism be it at local or global level. In his most recent book MacIntyre (2016) talks in some depth about how parents, teachers and other community members were unable to prevent a raft of school closures in Chicago. Even though many of these schools were closed and even though MacIntyre is unsparing in his analysis of elites in positions of power in Chicago (and how they did not engage people in debate about the common good or fairly distribute resources to the children of the poor) MacIntyre does not describe the teacher or community effort as forlorn. Perhaps this is because teachers were not *acting alone* but *with others* and for the common good in ways where they together learned what they had good reason to desire. Perhaps we have grounds for hope in the West after all so long as there exists the possibility of resisting the logic of the state and the market in ways that help us become better practical reasoners. Perhaps it is also the responsibility of those working in the humanities and social sciences to document such local acts of resistance so that we all might learn from them.

Notes on Contributor

James MacAllister is a senior lecturer in philosophy of education at the University of Edinburgh. He principally researches the philosophy of education. His recent publications include a single author research monograph with Routledge in 2017 entitled *Reclaiming Discipline for Education: Knowledge, relationships and the birth of community* as well as a paper in the *Journal of Scottish Thought* from 2018 called 'Ronald W. Hepburn on Wonder and the Education of Emotions and Subjectivity'.

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